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LB 305, 664

LB 664, as written, as a threat to this group plan that NSEA has. If it's working, cost-effective, fine. The local bargaining units at the school district level are going to have to come to an agreement to change and if you are in favor of local control, and I think a good many of us in this body have served on school boards, that's a sit-down situation where you negotiate with the teachers' representatives and arrive at some agreement. And if this pool is doing its job, as claimed, this bill is no threat to that. That group policy seems to be working, you know, very well. Fine, we'll continue with it. We do need to address the issue that LB 305 is going to bring forth on salaries, and having worked on this bill and done research on it, it's obvious that the teachers have taken a big part of their compensation package and put it into fringe benefits, one of them being health insurance, of course. It's been a major item in any negotiated settlement, is health insurance. When you give a teacher a figure, say a 4 or 5 percent package...increase in their compensation package, they've typically applied a big part of that to health insurance and forgone the salary increase. So that enters into this debate also. If this can save money on health insurance costs by making this group plan more cost-effective then I would suggest that that money could be channeled then into teacher salaries. That still does not contradict my statement if it's working, fine; we...it's...this bill should not be a threat to it. If we can improve it, fine. It gives these people an option. And I'm wondering if Senator Bourne conferred with the community colleges and the state college system representatives when they drafted this amendment, because they have talked to me at length and they are not in favor of the Bourne amendment, absolutely not. So, rather than limit the pool by excluding these people from any further options, we need to defeat the Bourne amendment and allow these people to possibly enlarge the group plan, or if they want to form a pool, that's fine. This bill would allow for oversight from the Department of...state Department of Insurance, which is really the way it should be. So I do not consider LB 664 a threat to the group plan. I think it could make it more efficient. It would become a pool with some oversight by the state Department of Insurance. And as we go through this discussion it's becoming more obvious to me that that's one of the reasons they oppose...